

equality and freedom for all people be our goal."

Crimes based on prejudice are a poor reflection on our communities, and I congratulate Galesburg for refusing to stand by in silence.

#### VETERANS FUNDING

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

My colleagues, the House passed the largest increase in veterans funding in the 77-year history of the Veterans Affairs Department. The bill provides more than \$37 billion for veterans programs. This is a \$4.4 billion increase over last year. As pointed out earlier, it has been over 130 days since the House passed the VA/Military Construction funding. Yet they have refused to appoint conferees like the Senate, their counterparts, have already done. So at this point the bill can't move forward and be signed by the President.

By the Democrats' failure to move forward on this bill, veterans are losing out on \$600 million for posttraumatic stress disorder care, traumatic brain injury research and care; \$4.1 billion to improve VA facilities, hospitals and clinics; and, lastly, \$480 million for prosthetic research to help our wounded veterans retain a positive quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, we urge our Democrat colleagues to move forward on this bill and have it to the President so he can sign it on Veterans Day.

#### NATURAL DISASTERS

(Mr. BLUMENAUER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Our hearts go out to the almost million people forced to flee their homes from wildfires in Southern California. At the same time a drought has gripped North Carolina and Georgia which in the long run may be end up being as devastating.

These disasters are almost unimaginable, except we've been there before, like in Southern California in 2003. And two-thirds of the new development in the last 10 years in Southern California has been in areas we know are subject to wildfire. What are we going to do about it?

The administration's refusal to deal meaningfully with global warming is the most glaring example of behaviors that doom us to reruns for years to come. Georgia has no real plan to deal with its water and doesn't even know what supplies it can count upon. Here in Congress, we fail to prioritize the right infrastructure and give billions of dollars for relief after a disaster and won't spend millions to invest in programs to protect before it happens.

I hope and pray that the message sinks in and that we use this disaster

as a wake-up call to get our act together to help people before these things happen to save both lives and money in the future.

#### CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

(Mr. DREIER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to express on behalf of California's congressional delegation our appreciation to our colleagues here in the House of Representatives and to the administration, President Bush and Secretary Chertoff and Director Paulison and others in the administration who are at this moment on the ground in Southern California, and to the courageous firefighters and Governor Schwarzenegger and his entire team for all that is being done to deal with what has been described by one battalion chief in San Diego, California, as the worst fire that the State has ever faced. Last night, Brian Williams of NBC News said that the fact that nearly a million people have been evacuated from their homes means that this is the largest movement of people since the Civil War.

We are going to go through some very difficult and challenging days ahead, and to the firefighters, to those who have suffered losses, our thoughts and prayers are with you. And again my appreciation to our colleagues who represent States across this country, North Carolina, Wyoming, Arizona, Idaho, States all across this country, Mr. Speaker, that have stepped up to the plate to help us. I also want to express my appreciation to Speaker PELOSI as well.

#### CHIP

(Mr. SIRES asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. SIRES. Mr. Speaker, the bipartisan CHIP Reauthorization Act had the support of over two-thirds of the U.S. Senate, nearly every U.S. Governor, and an overwhelming majority of the American people. Unfortunately, it did not have the support of two crucial parties, President Bush who vetoed it and his Republican friends who voted to uphold his veto.

Instead of helping us extend health care to low-income children, the President claims this fully-paid-for bill is excessive spending and instead he proposes to spend just \$5 billion more than we do now on the CHIP program. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the President's plan will lead to more than 800,000 children losing their coverage.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to know how the President and his Republican enablers would determine which 800,000 children lose their coverage. And what do they tell the 4 million children who are currently eligible for CHIP, but

will have no hope of getting this coverage unless our bipartisan bill passes? It is time for Republicans in this body to reject the President's plan to cut health care for children and stand with us in strengthening the CHIP program.

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#### COMBATING THE EMERALD ASH BORER

(Mr. ROSKAM asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ROSKAM. Mr. Speaker, I rise today and urge my colleagues to join with me and our colleague Mr. KIRK in cosponsoring H.R. 3901, the Emerald Ash Borer Municipality Assistance Act.

What is an emerald ash borer, you may ask. Well, it is a nasty little bug that has found its way on to our shores, which has a very aggressive disposition towards ash trees in particular. It is a native of China, and there are no known natural predators here in the United States.

If you think of the districts that we all represent, many of them have beautiful canopies of trees that line our streets and create wonderful natural ways all throughout our districts. Yet this bug has shown up in Illinois, my State; Indiana; Michigan; Ohio; Pennsylvania; Maryland and West Virginia.

As one researcher of the Morton Arboretum, which I represent, said, "The emerald ash borer doesn't just kill a majority of the ash trees it encounters; it seems to kill them all."

This legislation creates a revolving loan fund whereby municipalities have access to those moneys, and they use it in order to take on this scourge.

#### PROVIDING HEALTH CARE FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICAN CHILDREN

(Mr. WALZ of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALZ of Minnesota. Mr. Speaker, last week 10 million children were denied health insurance because some of my colleagues on the Republican side of the aisle chose to stand with President Bush over the children.

It is disappointing that some of our colleagues stood with the President and stood with the smoke-and-mirrors campaign to distort what the SCHIP legislation was. But this is not the end; it is only the beginning of the effort of this Congress to stand with American families to protect health care for our children.

Democrats in this body, along with 68 Members of the Senate and 43 of our Nation's Governors and over 80 percent of the American public want this piece of legislation to move. We are committed to ensuring that States have the resources and flexibility necessary to enroll these children.

Mr. Speaker, the American people, Governors and many Members of Congress, both Democrat and Republican,